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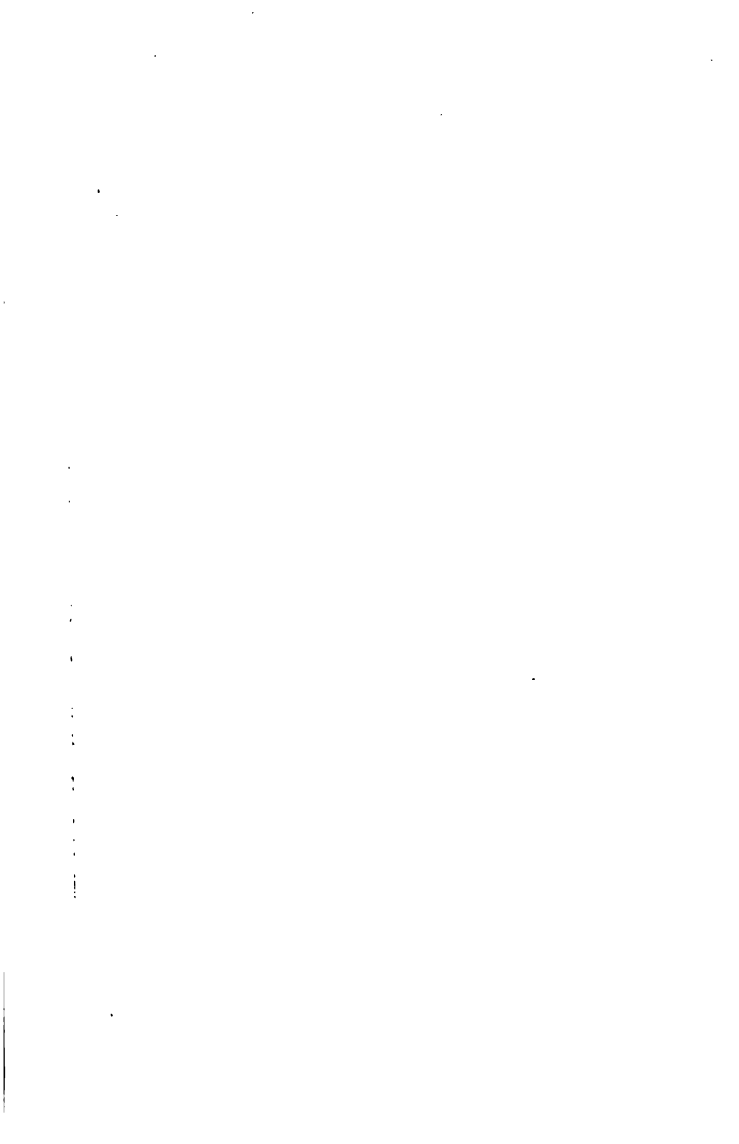
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**MENDELSSOHN.**  
(From a portrait by W. Hensel.)

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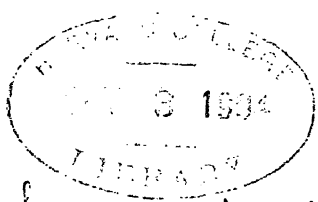
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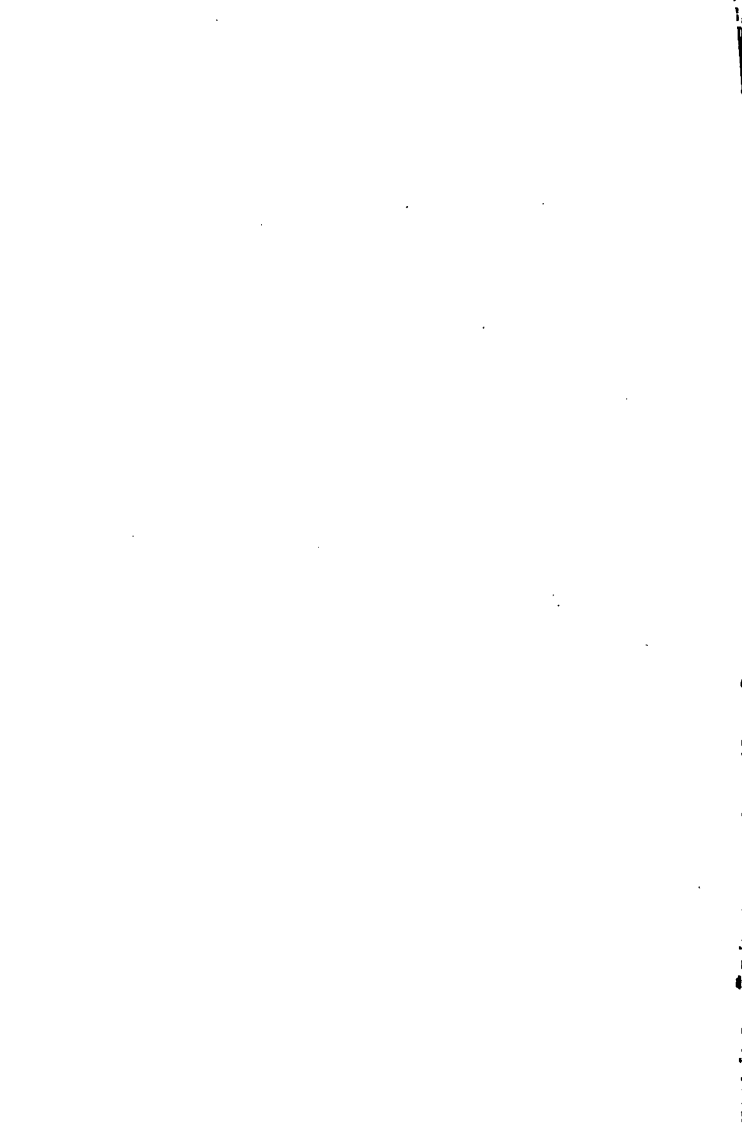


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An Anthem  
for a Mezzo Soprano Solo  
with Chorus  
and Organ Accompaniments  
composed for  
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F  
Felix Mendelssohn *Autograph*

Leipzig 14 December 1840

AUTOGRAPH DEDICATION OF AN ANTHEM.

[In the British Museum.]

## INTRODUCTORY

**E**NTERING upon a biographical appreciation of Mendelssohn, I conceive it necessary, for a beginning, to outline more or less the facts of his musical accomplishment, in order that finally, when the details of his life have been discussed, they may, as it were, fit into the preliminary picture which I purpose to give. Mendelssohn was essentially a man who belonged to the world of his time. He wrote for it, he worked for it, he made himself attractive for it; he was received by Kings and Princes on terms of equality, just on account of the immediate attractiveness of his music; he was worshipped by the public; he never knew what it was to have more than small failures; he stretched his artistic output from Leipsig to Birmingham; he played the pianoforte score of the Ninth Symphony to Goethe; he sat for his portraits as a genius should, showing a liberal expanse of forehead; the very rumour of his death seemed, at his age, incredible to his townspeople. In fact, he had every success in life—a success which never attended the footsteps of Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach, but a success

which, making him immediately popular, has in the passage of time somewhat thinned out the effectiveness of his art.

It is the invariable law that there should be compensation on all sides for success and for failure. A man will have, in the few and evil days of his life, such disappreciation that only his belief in the central point of his soul, very often carries him through to the bitter end, and to the success "that cometh after death." Such examples in history, though they remind one of the perpetual law of equipoise, still remain as evidences of a certain individual cruelty, upon the altar of which some of the finest intelligences of the world have been sacrificed. Upon that altar Mozart, to the eternal shame of the world of his own day, was placed. The same fate attended the career of Schubert. Bach himself, although he had his triumphs in organ-lofts—and, let it never be forgotten, to the credit of our country, that the printed appreciation of Dr. Burney, whose fame, oddly enough, except in musical circles, has rested upon the reputation of the authoress of "Evelina," "Cecilia," and "Camilla," was the first public word ever uttered here about his enormous, his unutterable genius—had to lie so long in the darkness of men's lack of interest in all that is highest in musical achievement and in musical genius, that he had to wait for a Mendelssohn to discover the scores which were subsequently given to the world. I sometimes think, even

confronting so beautiful a score as the overture to "A Midsummer Night's Dream," that this was Mendelssohn's greatest gift to our time.

The journey of Sir Arthur Sullivan and Sir George Grove which resulted in the finding of Schubert's greatest work, of course, will ever enter into the region of adventurous romance. They, with a bright-eyed and young desire to find that which may be called, *apropos* of Schubert, his Lost Legion, did a wonderful and extraordinary work; but Mendelssohn's discovery of Bach, though not so romantic in its preparation, was much more effective in its result. Here I touch upon a point which can scarcely be brought out in later biographical chapters, unless I make now a special mention of it. It partly explains Mendelssohn's success, and partly explains Mendelssohn's defects. Unlike so many of the greatest musicians, he, with his warm heart and his sympathetic feelings, was not by any means solely attached to his own sentiment of creativeness. He was ever looking away from himself towards the possibilities of other men, and he was too ready to listen to counsel and advice. An artist of the very first rank should never listen to advice. It is utterly fatal to his own personality, and he should avoid it, and avoid the friend that would give it, in the Biblical phrase, "charm he never so wisely." A man who listens to advice must necessarily sacrifice a certain fragment of his personality, and

the well-known walk which Mendelssohn took after the first performance of *Elijah* with two prominent musical critics, when they persuaded him to alter some details of his oratorio, shows how charming a man he must have been, but in some respects how deficient an artist. I speak now in general terms. Mendelssohn was, in all intention, in all thought, in all meaning, and in all industry, absolutely an artist. There was, however, a trace of weakness, a sort of futile little rivulet, running through the continent of his strength, which enfeebled his art by just so much that, though one can describe him as a very fine, an extremely accomplished, a wonderfully gifted musician, one cannot rightly associate him with those great men who gave up everything, who sacrificed everything, who cared nothing for life, who cared nothing for death—such men as Palestrina, as Bach, as Mozart, as Gluck—so long as they realized their souls that had been entrusted to them for realization.

Mendelssohn, then, was of a somewhat weaker stock than these giants; yet both his music and his character show how great a stock of sweetness, of kindness, of innocent gaiety, and of a beautiful sense of the civic life, filled his most vital spirit. He was a Jew. To be a Jew implies that the conventions of life are very rarely set at naught. It implies a devotion to the sense of rule, to the sense of convention, even, one may say, to a

general sense of neatness. To look at a Mendelssohn score is to look upon a work of art in sheer penmanship. He never, for example, wrote an indecently hurried line ; his regularity was merely amazing. When he travelled to Italy he took the greatest care to secure the best place in the best coaches. He gloried in the fine material of his cloaks ; he never allowed his portrait to be painted without insisting upon the emphasis of his forehead. He enjoyed with every fibre of his being the patronage of royalty. To play the pianoforte before Queen Victoria was, as he himself expressed it, "the greatest joy of my life." His nationality was, in fact, elementally expressed in every detail of Mendelssohn's life and Mendelssohn's art. The quickness of his young intellect, the perfection of his personal training, the cleanliness of his mind, the almost exaggerated desire to appear in public at his neatest, the singular dignity of his manner, combined with a sort of boyishness of temperament, his love of family life, his attachment to all that was given to him by nature to be near and dear to him—all these things bespoke the Jewish nature. A beautiful character, a delightful personality—but with the limitations of his nature. By that I mean to say that the curious tribal influence which makes for the greatness of Judaism also defines its boundaries.

Mendelssohn was afraid to launch out into new ideas ; he feared the discords of existence ;

he trembled to think of the paths wherein music might be destined to wander. It would seem as though all Jews of modern times inherit a hatred of the wanderings of their ancestors in the desert. Mendelssohn certainly inherited that hatred, and the marvel is that, carefully circumscribing his artistic life, determining never, for example, to write consecutive fifths, horrified, as he would have been had he lived, to hear the first page of "Das Rheingold," he still did so much within the narrow circle that he drew around him. Exclusive and popular, easily intelligible yet technically perfect, delightful companion and intolerant of vulgarity, charming in spirit and yet somewhat finicking in his details, Mendelssohn stands out as a great genius who may be compared to a small chamber lighted by intense sunlight. Through that sunlight he always looked upon the world, and the world looked back, recognising the illumination of his brain, and in his contemporary generation wondering at it. But when that light was extinguished, when the man had gone to his long home, the outstanding world began to question whether such brilliancy in so short a time was made for immortality. I shall try to show, in the course of my appreciation, how far the outer darkness and the inner brilliance of that extraordinary man affected his own time and our time—and will probably affect future times.



**MENDELSSOHN.**  
(From a portrait by Magnus.)





## LIFE OF MENDELSSOHN

### EARLY YEARS

**F**ELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY, who also, one thinks a little humorously, rejoiced in the names of Jakob Ludwig, was born in the tenth year of the last century. Jewish to the core, without a trace, so far as one can make out, of Christian blood in his veins, Felix from the outset of his life was peculiarly and naturally susceptible to family influence, and to that comfortable convention which one always associates with the interior significance of family life. First of all, such a family life engenders a peculiar innocence of character, and Felix imbibed that instinct with that extraordinary sensitiveness to the meaning of Judaism which followed him throughout his life. Jews have, if one may make a humorous point, always been celebrated for emigration. In the days of Pharaoh they emigrated to Palestine; in these days Mr. Israel Zangwill would have them emigrate to some land of promise where their own ideals may be entirely fulfilled.

When Felix was only three years old his

family migrated from Hamburg to Berlin, and it is very curious to notice that, as Sir George Grove records, the first definite family event which we hear of was a visit to Paris by Joseph and Abraham in 1816 in connection with the liquidation of the indemnity to be paid by France to Prussia on account of the war that crushed Napoleon. That, of course, was the greatest of modern wars which ceased in 1815, when at last the nerve and the energy, the spirit and the endless resource of the Teutonic races, which culminated in this land of ours, brought to a conclusion the greatest ambition and the greatest desire that, with one exception, ever seized the soul of a man great enough to write a law code, but not great enough to conquer the world. That attainment of inordinate ambition was not permitted either to Alexander or to Julius Cæsar, or to Napoleon, or to Peter the Great, or to any of those singular beings who by the loyalty of their fellow-men are able to accomplish their ambitions, sometimes in full, but sometimes in part, these latter falling and fading away by the roadside.

When Felix was seven years old, his father took him to Paris in company with his sister. It was here that the boy learned the pianoforte, under a singularly sympathetic teacher, Madame Bigot. From Paris the family returned to Berlin, and from this point forward the serious education of the young musician began. But though he learned the

customary classical course, and even in his Greek went as far as the old tragedians, it was clear that music alone, apart from a sentiment of general culture which remained with him all through his life, was destined to absorb his brain. Music it was which was pulsing through his blood from his earliest consciousness of self. Even as a lad he seemed to have been quite irresistible.

In 1818 he appeared in public for the first time, and appeared really to have achieved a genuinely popular success at the pianoforte in a trio for that instrument and two horns. At this point one is keenly reminded of St. Paul's fine phrase : " When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ; but when I became a man I put away childish things." At the mature age of twelve Mendelssohn fulfilled this description of childhood turning into manhood, for it was in the year 1820 that he set himself down thoroughly to enter into the work of original composition. The marvellous boy—yet apart from his art he remained a boy all through his life—from this moment began to take himself with all seriousness. I will touch later on the mass of work which poured from his extraordinarily prolific pen during this period, but it is rather with the general aspect of his life and personality that I would deal here. His peculiar good fortune of being born into a house where there was no such thing as pecuniary trouble—I say good for-

tune, because it has happened rarely enough to the great artists of the world—gave him every opportunity for the expansion of his exuberant and gay nature, and the possibility of travel naturally added to his experience of the sounds of the world.

To make a small digression here, it will be found that in Mendelssohn's best music he shows himself peculiarly sensitive to objective sound. His travels in Italy, his travels in Scotland, for example, resulted in some of his finest and most original work. It is only when he became definitely introspective that the hand of adverse criticism becomes powerful. It was in 1822 that he travelled in Switzerland with the whole of his family, and it was during this period that his eagerly receptive mind literally teemed with musical ideas and musical thoughts. One does not realize all that Mendelssohn might have been if only this magnificent promise had continued to a final achievement worthy of these beginnings. At this time he seems to have been unconventional, liberal, and even inclined to musical prankishness. He played to Goethe, for example, in 1821, and the old poet much desired to hear a fugue of Bach. Mendelssohn played the greater part of the fugue through from memory, but suddenly forgetting the music, he carried the work on by a splendidly audacious piece of improvisation of his own composition. Goethe, it need scarcely be said, had not the smallest knowledge of the

trick that had been played upon him, and it may with equal truth be said that ten years later Mendelssohn himself would have been shocked to think that either he, or anybody else, would have been capable of such a piece of boyish mischief.

In truth, it is here that the riddle of Mendelssohn, the puzzle of his greatness and the conundrum of his littleness, is absolutely solved. Mendelssohn, by the gift of the gods, was allowed a certain number of years in which to use his genius precisely as his own whimsical fancy led him; then the gates of Israel clanged upon him, and in his later years he was doomed to say nothing which was not conventionally right, and to say little which was original and liberal. It was his fate to wear the best-cut clothes and the shiniest silk hat that were ever seen within the walls of a musical synagogue. I think that it is a matter of great pathos to watch this brown-curled, free-thoughted boy playing, as it were, in the fields or by the side of the sea, or running over Northern hills, or laving himself with the dews of Italian springs, drawn inevitably and hopelessly, as the loadstone draws the iron, to the complete, the utter respectability of the synagogue. Race prevailed over genius; and therefore it is with his earlier life that the musician is chiefly delighted, and hesitates over, or is now and then even a little appalled by the work of his maturity.

## MATURE LIFE

Throughout his whole life Mendelssohn had the ambition to compose opera. He had, without any doubt, a strong element of the dramatic in his temperament, but it was so overshadowed by what can only be called his sense of the absolute in music that his young and more mature desires in this direction were stunted and withered. At the age of fifteen he had written his fourth opera, for example, a work entitled *Die Beiden Neffen*. Yet it is strange to recollect that never once was he destined to make any sort of operatic success. Mozart and he died at practically the same age, and Mozart's instrumental work is more famous than that of Mendelssohn, and deservedly so; yet into those crowded years of glorious life Mozart managed to put the most magnificent operatic work that the world has seen. Of course, we speak of opera pure and simple, not of the Wagnerian music-drama. So, through an extraordinary boyhood, and a still more extraordinary youth, the musician passed on his way, composing, improvising, performing incredible feats of sheer musicianship, and invariably making new friends and attracting enthusiasm in every circle wherein he moved.

Before he was nineteen his father again took him to Paris, and introduced him to all the musical society which then made it a sort of artistic centre of Europe. Here he was fêted,

here he played, and here once more he was petted on all sides. His own attitude towards French music, however, seems to have been less favourable than the attitude of French musicians towards him, and one little matter which Sir George Grove records throws the strongest light upon Mendelssohn's temperament and influence.

Everybody who has read the works of Berlioz will remember, for example, his extraordinary bitterness towards Cherubini. Berlioz despised Cherubini as being an example of the worst type of the academic musician; Cherubini, in return, insulted Berlioz to the best of his ability. Mendelssohn's intercourse with the old Italian musician is described as being "very satisfactory." He "was more than civil to Felix, and his expressions of satisfaction must have given the father the encouragement which he was so slow to take in the great future of the boy." To do Abraham Mendelssohn justice, one is bound to add that his opinion of his son's talent has been by the extremely modern critic partially countersigned. Marx records that the father constantly urged his son to go into business. "He believed that his son had no genius for music, and that it was all the happier for him that he had not."

Father and son were back in Berlin before the midsummer of 1825, having on their way called upon Goethe, to whom the young artist played the B minor Quartet, dedicating the work at the same time to the German poet.



Still, the young man hankered after opera, and composed a work in two acts, the libretto of which was furnished by Klingemann. Once more one has to record that the very fact of a libretto couched in dramatic style seemed to clip his wings, and to prevent the brightness of his genuine spirit from shining before the world.

We are now nearing, however, a point in Mendelssohn's career which, to my mind, definitely fixes the limitations and the completeness of his talent. It will have been noticed, even in the record which we have reached of his career, that in absolute music he was brilliant, that he had the very strongest desire to compose dramatic music, but that in this latter ambition Nature invariably thwarted him. Therefore it was that in taking up Shakespeare's comedy, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and in writing for it a dramatic overture in which there was nothing in the way of literature to distract him, and yet in which he was freed from the impositions of music which is made essentially for itself and nothing else, the result was that at the age of seventeen he composed the most brilliant work of his whole life. Serious and conscientious, exquisitely melodious, and finely compact as is so much of his maturer music, this overture remains as the chrysolite of his brain, as the most perfect flower of his artistic dream and desire. This overture was practically the completion of Mendelssohn's

musical promise. I shall later recur to the detailing of some of the youthful works which occupied the time of his amazing boyhood; but he is now to be regarded as a serious and responsible artist. His thoughts had reached a stage of ripeness from which they have to be judged by the greatest of all artistic tests, the test of comparison.

You see him, then, standing, as it were, tiptoe before he steps out along the fields of his own art; and it is a little tragic to think that in the final farewell to his youth and in the greeting which he makes to his maturity is seen to be the perfect flower of his musical mind. That he should have attained so much in so short a time, and that after so youthful a period, in spite of his enormous toil, he should not have taken much higher flight, is a fact as remarkable, as extraordinary, as anything that I know of in the history of art. When Mozart died he was still writing better and better work. Had Wagner died at the age which Mendelssohn attained when his days were finally numbered, we should have had little more than his cheap and early operas. Therefore, it is possible to regard the career of this extraordinary man, Mendelssohn, as in a sense unparalleled.

From this time forward, then, we have to regard Mendelssohn as a musical artist whose works are to be reckoned on precisely the level of a fully accomplished and a fully

matured musician. His opera *Camacho*, by one of those rare chances which occurred to him in life, did not pass along the primrose path of easy production, and it shows exactly how accustomed Mendelssohn was to everyday success in that this very slight rebuff seems, for a time at least, to have thoroughly embittered him. We hear a good deal of his sensitive nature, and of the quickness with which he was thrown into despondency; but, after all, one must really remember that sensitiveness is not alone confined to the artist who scarce knows what it is to have a rebuff. Had Mendelssohn been compelled to endure the whips and scorns of time which fell to the lot of Wagner, it is likely that we should have had little enough work from his pen. *Camacho* was produced once, and the press seems to have been unanimously condemnatory. We are told that the failure even embittered his mind to such an extent that his health began to show real signs of weakness. Berlin, wherefrom he learned, or rather refused to learn, a most wholesome lesson, became thenceforward to him a place to which he could never refer without some petty criticism or weak contempt.

The commodious dwelling into which the family had now removed was such as was likely to foster all the strength and all the weakness which may be found in his music. There was nothing to annoy him; every surrounding was luxurious. He practically had

all time and all means to give up to any fancy that might occupy his mind for the moment. He played bowls, he played billiards, he danced, he rode, and he took all the gymnastic exercises which meant to him a great deal of enjoyment in life. The place was visited by everybody who was sufficiently respectable to enter into a charmed circle where all that riches, high spirits, versatility, and artistic eminence was able to foregather. One cannot help, at such a juncture, thinking what an utterly bad training this was to a musician of undoubted genius. To have all that you desire does not precisely create an appetite for hard work; and although Mendelssohn's productivity was extremely large, it nevertheless has to be remembered that throughout all his work there is just the touch of superficiality which might easily have been the outcome of a life too prosperous, too free from anxiety, and therefore requiring all too little that peering into the depths of thought by which alone salvation in an artist is to be found. You read practically of nothing but gaieties and prosperous journeys, with interleaved pages, as it were, dotted down with successive compositions.

In 1827 he is in the hills with a party of friends, and therewith we have the A minor Quartet to record. Then there is the fugue in E flat, and a charming little Christmas symphony written for children, just the

kind of thing that a happy man would write when surrounded by everything that was agreeable and pleasant during a season of peace and goodwill.

The year 1828 saw an almost exact parallel with the previous year. We have compositions excellent, mediocre, and indifferent; and the germ of the subsequent *Lieder ohne Worte* also saw light during the same period. We are also told that he scored anew Handel's "Acis and Galatea," a little piece of impudence which, as a rule, one finds strangely antipathetic to Mendelssohn's nature.

At this time a curious little incident in connection with a matter which has done immense honour to his fine enthusiasm—namely, his practical reintroduction of the music of Bach to the musical world—somewhat estranged him from the musicians of Berlin. Jealousies grow fast where artists are gathered together, and the great success of certain performances given by a choir under his own direction gradually made him anxious to separate himself from the narrow world in which he had been living. Sir George Grove hints that the position of his family, and the resultant luxury in which he naturally lived, tended to alienate many, who had not such advantages, from the brilliant young artist. And this is more than natural. No doubt these felt that Mendelssohn was making his conquests unfairly, and, human nature being what it is, it is only natural that Mendelssohn

should have felt a deep sense of injustice, while his opponents felt an equally deep sense of grievance. Be all this as it may, and indeed the life of the man in the street is made up of such incidents, which never come to any importance, Mendelssohn determined, early in the year 1829, after his sister's marriage, to leave Berlin, and to pay a visit to England.

#### VISIT TO ENGLAND

Mendelssohn, then, a lucky musician who had no worldly cares to trouble his spirit, and who, whether his art succeeded or failed, knew, at all events, that the mere facts of life were smooth for him—it is odd that only in regard to this artist among the first names in music it is possible to write in just this strain—arrived in London in the Easter week of 1829, and promptly took rooms in Great Portland Street. Here he found himself surrounded by congenial friends, and quickly set to work to place his artistic affairs in order. Within a month of his landing he made his *début* at a Philharmonic Concert, in those days, as everybody knows, held at the old Argyll Rooms, where Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was produced. The young musician's C minor Symphony was given on this occasion, and so warmly was it applauded that he dedicated its subsequent publication to the Society. From this time forward, it would seem, his position had taken

a firm root so far as London audiences were concerned, and the spreading of the branches and the unfolding of the foliage were only destined to be a matter of time. In due course other concerts took place, at which he himself not only figured as one of the principal composers, but in which he took an active personal part.

Again we note how active Mendelssohn was at all periods of his career to enlarge the fame and to secure greater appreciation for the composers whom his most delicate critical instinct persuaded him to be the salt of the earth; for at this time the E flat Concerto of Beethoven, which had not yet made its way to these shores, was played by him at one of these concerts. In order, however, thoroughly to appreciate the character of Mendelssohn, one has to recollect that during this period he was hailed on every side as a society favourite, embarked upon every sort of innocent path of gaiety, danced much, and made his life as happy and agreeable as man can when he has health, high spirits, finely strung temperament, and, above all, money. I do not think that you will find this combination in any other composer whose name has become so widely extended as that of Mendelssohn.

I find herein another clue among many clues that gradually, step by step, lead one to an intimate knowledge of Mendelssohn the musician and Mendelssohn the man. It was

that combination of qualities which made both his strength and his weakness. Had he been less inclined to indulge in the fascinations of life for their own sakes, he might have done work which would never have been questioned by later generations; had he resigned himself entirely to the production of mere musical trivialities, he would probably have been reckoned among the greatest social lights of his generation—so strangely were the elements mixed in him. Sir George Grove tells an amusing story in connection with this midsummer visit to England. On the occasion to which I have just referred, when the Beethoven Concerto was given, it so happened that he was carrying about with him his overture to "A Midsummer Night's Dream," later on entrusting the score to Mr. Attwood. Unfortunately that gentleman, whose guardianship of such a treasure was evidently unworthy of his memory, left the overture in a hackney coach, and was naturally overwhelmed by a sense of irreparable loss. When Mendelssohn was informed of that loss he, in a very minor way, repeated the action of that greatest of men, Sir Isaac Newton, when an accident destroyed his manuscripts, saying that the thing was quite unimportant, for he could easily complete another. This he did; and when his new manuscript was compared with the parts it was found that the score was in every respect precisely the same as that which had been lost.

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Still, it would seem that no touch of hardness, no lack of sympathy, had ever entered into this fortunate man's life. The only trouble which apparently assailed his soul was that up to this time he had not taken serious steps, to put the matter humorously, to earn his own living. Grove seems to think that this was a difficult problem which Mendelssohn had not yet solved. To me the idea is perfectly grotesque, because it is quite certain that had Mendelssohn been in the least desirous of turning his enormous success at this time to pecuniary advantage, the thing could have been done with the greatest facility.

It was not until the middle of July of this year that he left London, after having achieved really a splendid success. Yet there are many little details on record about that life in London which show how he and his friends, in many respects, anticipated the life which is now common in that gayest of countries, Bohemia. You may see after concerts night after night in London at the present period the *delicatessen* shops crowded with concert-goers at late hours in the evening, buying in an orthodox way the cold viands which may make an appetizing supper. Mendelssohn anticipated that freedom of gastronomic ideas. After dining with two friends at the Prussian Ambassador's house, he records that they all called at a little shop, bought three German sausages, and, after retiring into a dark alley, devoured them with an infinite zest of humour.

Thus do the generations repeat one another with a difference; and that difference lies so far in this, that though I could readily picture Richard Strauss eating a sausage at a certain well-known shop near the Queen's Hall, I cannot picture him devouring the same delicacy surrounded by a troop of friends in Riding-house Street.

The end of the musical season in London did not put an end to Mendelssohn's stay in these Islands. He travelled North almost immediately, and, arriving in Scotland, began at once, according to his own statement, to lay the foundation of one of his greatest works, the *Scotch Symphony*. In those days travelling in the Highlands was not so easy or so convenient as it is now. Mr. McBrayne's steamers were not then plying along the Caledonian and Crinan Canals, making practically an uninterrupted route between Inverness and Oban. From Fort William the little party had to walk through the hills from point to point. Sir George Grove is responsible for the statement that Mendelssohn "sketched and wrote enormous letters at every step!" Though that statement is amusingly excessive, the records of his delighted enjoyment of every varied scene in his journey are almost numberless. Indeed, romance was part of Mendelssohn's essential composition, and his passage through a country so bleakly fine and so finely bleak, together with historical associations of battle

and of the rumours of wars, barely more than three-quarters of a century old, aroused in him singular passion, which in the end found an outlet in music which for its freshness, its brilliant sense of the open air, and its community with everything that is not huddled under roofs, whether of palaces or of narrow houses, was never equalled again by him.

His return journey was of a more placid and uninteresting nature, even though the weather was dreadfully against the travellers ; but the whole tour was undoubtedly a tremendous incentive to the quick and eager Ariel that was within him, ever stimulating him at this time of his life—alas ! I have too often to emphasize that phrase—to new and swift things of art :

“ Come unto these yellow sands,  
And then take hands :  
Curtsey'd when you have and kiss'd  
The wild waves whist,  
Foot it featly here and there :  
And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear.”

For, indeed, living, as his mind seems to have done, in an atmosphere so charged with oxygen, the quickness and brightness of its flame made all too soon for its extinction. Never for a moment did he allow himself any rest ; if he had devoted himself in solitude entirely to his music, it might have been well. His active mind was alive with the music born of his Scottish experiences, and there were minor works also which he projected at this time.

The early autumn saw him again in London, with his E flat Quartet completed. An accident, painful but not serious, prevented his return to Berlin before the Christmas of 1829, and even then he was only able to hobble along by the aid of a stick, his knee having been very much hurt by his being thrown violently from a hackney carriage in one of his drives.

Arrived in Berlin, his teeming mind was once more occupied with innumerable schemes of work ; on the day after Christmas his *Heimkehr aus der Fremde* (The Return from Abroad) was produced, with the accompaniment of that success and that applause which ever followed him through life. His mind at the same time was taken up with the composition of a symphony for the festival of the three-hundredth anniversary of that which is famous in history as the "Augsburg Confession," a centenary preparing for the midsummer of 1830 ; under the subsequent title of *Reformation Symphony*, it has become famous in the world of music, and contains that celebrated Dresden Amen which Wagner subsequently used in the lovely Graal Motif from "Parsifal." "Jam enim Hiems transiit : imber abiit et recessit."

Once more he was ready for work and travel, when he was prostrated by an attack of the ridiculous ailment of measles. It was not until the middle of May that he started upon his memorable journey to Italy, taking Munich, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Milan, and Geneva into his chapter of travel. Rome

appears to have chiefly attracted his attention and admiration. His letters at this period contain innumerable passages which show with how careful an observation he looked out upon the world, and with how singular a nicety he caught just those essential and characteristic details which are so necessary in conveying a pictorial description of the external world to any correspondent. Take one or two examples : " The sea moved between the islands and the rocks crooned over. Nisida, covered with vegetation in this day, just as they did of yore. It is in these immemorial things that I am interested, these that mean so much more to me than the crumbling walls of the past." " Unchangeable still is the outline of the Alban Hills. Here no man scratches his initials or writes an inscription. Here I find abiding interest."

Sir George Grove recalls also about this Roman visit one of the most vividly illuminating facts about Mendelssohn which we remember to have met anywhere. He, the prophet and musician of smooth and gentle melody—sometimes more than sweet, and always less than austere—could not endure the Gregorian chant. Anybody who knows the lovely and grave music of the Passions which are sung in Rome—not, indeed, Gregorian (the omniscient Mendelssohn is here caught tripping), but founded upon the Gregorian instinct and ideal—and who with a large mind appreciates true sincerity in music, must, as I think, be



151  
 A. Dante sostenuto

Alto  
 Solo

Handwritten musical notation for the first system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics "My heart delay for ever smiles of comfort" are written below the vocal line.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics "more shall I give up, her thoughts never shall I long" are written below the vocal line.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics "Oh if thou forget me never smile of comfort to impart no if thou forget" are written below the vocal line. The system concludes with the instruction "Cresc. then... for".

Handwritten musical score for the Thirteenth Psalm, featuring vocal lines and organ accompaniment. The score is written on ten staves. The first two staves are vocal parts, with lyrics: "get me never, never more / never shall I give up / cheer this heart / Shall my soul still". The remaining eight staves are for organ accompaniment. The manuscript includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "Cresc." and "Solo".

AUTOGRAPH SCORE OF PART OF THE THIRTEENTH PSALM (VERSION OF C. B. BROADLEY), ALTO WITH ORGAN ACCOMPANIMENT.

[British Museum.





impressed by the wonderful dignity, the tremendous sincerity, and the stern beauty of this splendid song. Palestrina, that noblest of medieval masters, knew well what he was doing when he fashioned out of Gregorian modes and Gregorian manners of thought one of the masterpieces of ecclesiastical music ; but Mendelssohn was so curiously perverse in this matter that he actually had the impertinence to write in this strain : " I am much irritated to hear these solemn and moving words sung to music so trivial and dull ; they call it Gregorian, Plain-song, what you will, but it matters not. If at the time when this music was composed men had not learnt or did not choose to write in a different style, we at any rate in these modern times have the power to do it." Yet there are some of us who would willingly sacrifice " O rest in the Lord " for that beautiful melody in the Sixth Mode which is set to the words " Jesu, Corona Virginum." The fact is that, profoundly attached to the religious sentiment as Mendelssohn was, he had little or no sense of the depth of thought and emotion which went to build up a body of music which, despite the fact that it did not depend upon harmony for its evolution, and also the other fact that its inspiration was so single and uncomplex that the composers thereof merely attempted to fulfil their religious feeling, yet remains as a treatise wonderful and extraordinary in the long history of art.

Whistler once said that all art was summed

up in the Elgin Marbles, by which, of course, he implied that art fulfils itself completely in many separate chapters. Mendelssohn was not only unaware of that profound truth, but he was frivolous enough—in this connection, at all events—to ignore beauty which he was incapable of understanding. But how strange was his thorough and complete appreciation of Bach! “*Meliora cognosco proboque : deteriora sequor*”—such might well have been Mendelssohn’s motto to be inscribed over one of his lintels in the many-roomed mansions of art. Yet that he had the power of making the less good things appear beautiful—an accusation which it will be remembered was once levelled at Socrates—need not be regarded as very much to his disadvantage ; for, indeed, he had a sense and sentiment of surface loveliness which has rarely been equalled in the history of art.

One may therefore pass by Mendelssohn’s curious judgment upon the Gregorian song, if at the same time the reader realizes precisely those limitations which made that judgment possible, and, perhaps one may say, even necessary. Sir George Grove, a Mendelssohn enthusiast if ever there was one, judges the man very rightly when he says that of the devotional sentiment which animates Beethoven’s passionate prayers and confessions, “we find hardly a trace in his letters or his music.” Grove, by that subtle and individual instinct which distinguished all his criticism through

life, had therein discovered a fact the application of which he was sometimes too unready to develop.

Rome proved to Mendelssohn, as it has done to so many artists, a source of intense enjoyment, and of an almost amazing abandonment of self to the gladness of life. It was necessary, therefore, that from such experiences, which, if not very deep, were at all events very keen and real, an abundance of musical accomplishment should have been elicited. He finished the *Walpurgisnacht* and the *Hebrides*; he began the *Scotch Symphony* and the *Italian Symphony*; he went the rounds of all the artistic society to be found there; he even (save the mark!) met Berlioz. Donizetti and the son of Mozart occupied some of his attention, and, if one comes to think of it, the combination is not without its suggestiveness in a good deal of Mendelssohn's own work. And all the time, like the children in the charade, his sketch-books were not idle. With that peculiar omniscience which throughout distinguishes Mendelssohn on the purely emotional sides of art, he never let anything alone which, be it added, in a true and pure sense attracted those emotions. A striking difference exists between intelligence and intellect; a man of supreme intelligence may be an Admirable Crichton of the Arts, and yet have no intellect for literature or for criticism. Mendelssohn's intellectual attainments were far outbalanced by the intelligence of his mind, and we therefore realize

in all that he did just the lack of that golden thread which links the brain to the highest qualities of art—the golden thread which was never absent from Mozart's or Schubert's work, even in its earliest stages of development, and which shines like a dazzling ray of light in all the finished labours of Beethoven.

#### MARRIAGE

The end of 1831 and the beginning of the following year found Mendelssohn at Munich, then at Paris, and finally in London. Once more the almost cloying tale of success is to be recorded. Surrounded by friends, fêted, and at all times making a prominent display of his most brilliant talents, it is no wonder that he wrote of London, despite its smoke, its climate, and its dust, as the residence of his choice. Here for a moment I may pause to make a definite explanation of the attitude which in this brief biography I have adopted towards Mendelssohn. Not for a moment would I let it be thought that I depreciate his singular and enormous talents, or the profound influence which he has had upon the music of the generations which have succeeded him ; but there is no question whatever about the fact that absolute prosperity and an intense capacity on his part for happiness, freed him from those profundities of thought which, in Wordsworth's most exquisite phrase, "do often lie too deep for tears." His thoughts

were often tearfully beautiful, as one may instantly recall in, for example, the famous Widow Scene from *Elijah*; but the depths of such a melody as *Im diesen Halle* or *Piango il mio Ben cosi* were, most unfortunately, beyond his powers. At the same time, his recognition of beauty in music was the recognition which an artist might give to a field of daffodils in the spring, or to the wild roses that take the winds of June with beauty along the country hedgerows; and as I am dealing with a landscape metaphor, I seem rather to see Beethoven wandering among dark groves of stone-pine and eucalyptus, and Mozart seeking Eldorado, across midsummer Mediterranean seas.

It was at this time that the first book of the *Songs without Words* was published. These famous compositions, subsequently published in four books, are among the chief musical pages written by Mendelssohn which have endeared him to the musical amateur—the suburb that sighs, the middle-class musician who weeps, the sentimental person of tender heart who is “easily emotional.” They have a great and singular charm of a wholly unstrenuous kind; they do not stimulate, but they often soothe; their flame is not bright, but it is constant; their flights are not high, but, in Johnson’s phrase, they are long on the wing. In a word, they have a right to popularity, and that popularity they have succeeded in securing to the last drachma.

From London he returned to Berlin, where a disappointment which may be likened to the rose-leaf that lay under the princess's feather-bed awaited him. He put himself up for the post of conductor at the Singakademie, in the room of Zelter, who had just died; his disappointment in losing the post was intense and bitter. When one comes to think of it, the relativity of all facts in life is here most remarkably illustrated. Mendelssohn lamenting over the loss of a conductorship, compared to Mozart pawning his silver, makes a strange picture in contrasts. Sir George Grove is good enough to inform us that, despite this bitter cup, Mendelssohn lost none of his musical activity.

He was now for Düsseldorf, which has become more or less renowned in musical history as a patron town of great composers. It would be impossible to imagine anything more dreary or more dismally dull than the city itself, but for its contributions towards art much should be said in its favour. A city which in recent days has patronized names so modern as those of Richard Strauss and Edward Elgar should not be wholly held in disdain, despite its own feeble contribution towards the artistic painting and architecture of Germany; let this be said with a full realization of its exhibitions and boasted encouragement of the fine arts. Mendelssohn was filled with the idea at this period of a perfectly new career, and made it his business—a

business, be it said, which is the most honourable chapter in all his life—of encouraging the musical taste of the public by the production of great works written by great masters. His brilliant capacity for making friends was simultaneously emphasized by the attraction which Chopin felt for him, who was practically his daily companion at Düsseldorf, and of Hiller.

Working and ever working, this strangest combination of industry and intellectual idleness still went gaily along, with the sheaves of his new compositions in his hands. His greatest oratorio, though by no means his most celebrated—*St. Paul*—was composed in this year. If I were asked to choose the period at which the effervescence of brilliant youth and the beginning of ripe manhood met together, in Biblical words, like the kissing of Mercy and Charity, it would be just this point of his career, if only for the reason that he worked at the libretto with extreme slowness, the composition occupying his mind for no less than two years; it was not, in fact, finished until 1836.

A little before this period it may be noticed by any student of Mendelssohn's life that a certain exaggeration of sensitiveness entered into his various dealings, from both a business and a private point of view; looking back, as one does now, and realizing the darkness of his too early death upon him, one understands that this was simply a symptom of an outworn



vitality. Tender and sensitive as he was to the last degree, every shock of life seemed to throw him back, even as one has seen in a swift railway train the telegraph-wires apparently cast earthwards by the encounter of each separate telegraph-pole. The death of his father in 1835 gave him a most cruel shock, and from this time forward one notes distinctly a certain element of complaint in all his correspondence—an element, nevertheless, which for the moment was considerably relieved by the fact that his visit in this year to Frankfort brought him to the usual crisis of man's destiny—marriage. He was married on March 28, 1837, to Mdlle. Jeanrenaud, and his novel experience of sympathetic companionship resulted, as it naturally would, with so extremely sensitive a mind, in a great deal of composition. Work, indeed, became everything to him, and, separated from his wife for a brief time, we find him in August of the same year in Birmingham. Here he placed himself in serious discussion with Klingemann on the subject of an oratorio on *Elijah*. At the same time, he kept himself incessantly busy playing, now at St. Paul's, now at Christ Church in Newgate Street, and elsewhere. He was pleased to find that his oratorio *St. Paul*, as performed at Exeter Hall, was "very interesting," and his attitude towards Birmingham in connection with the same oratorio is a most amusing mixture of delight and indignation.

From England this busy creature, so busy that he never seemed to be anything but a bird of passage, flew to Leipzig, where he began to build up a peculiar and personal reputation which endeared him to every cultivated person in that ancient and celebrated city—a reputation which within its own circle was only once before surpassed, and by a musician who much surpassed Mendelssohn—Bach.

We are now close upon the period when *Elijah*, which he at all events destined as his masterpiece, was taking serious shape and form in his mind. It was indeed characteristic of the man that he should have taken the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, and the most dramatic, for the subject of his music; for Mendelssohn the Jew was also Mendelssohn the man, devoted to drama, but for ever prevented from writing it in absolute form. Meanwhile, before his thoughts had come to any fulfilment, he occupied himself as actively as ever. Matrimony seems to have been a sort of stimulant with him. The very fact of presenting his wife to his own family seems to have been the occasion of much inspiration. Whatever may be thought in these days of his single Violin Concerto, there can be no doubt about the impulse and energy which prompted its composition, which occupied him during 1839. In the autumn of the same year he was again at Leipzig, and forced to endure an attack

of a minor illness. On his recovery, we find him back at work, alternating between Düsseldorf and Frankfort.

#### LAST PERIOD

The year 1840 found Mendelssohn a tired-out man, even though he had seven years more of his career to run. Descriptive as ever, he is found writing to his family, in connection with the Gewandhaus Concert, that even to walk down the street was like playing a pedal passage. Surely, despite the assumed mirth of the statement, few sadder records of work have ever been recorded in the history of art. The man, constantly at labour, unable to forget his toil in his recreation, still continues to work while there is yet day. Nevertheless, with that madness which is to great wits close allied, he paid his sixth visit to England for the first performance of the *Lobgesang*, a work which, however, did not take its definitely accepted form until some months afterwards. Perhaps there are few passages more touching in the whole range of Mendelssohn's work than the famous Watchman Scene. It is perhaps the only occasion in all Mendelssohn's career when he touched the remote pages of musical mystery. Romance had met him in his early days ; tragedy had often approached him without very deeply touching him ; but here all the mystery, the quietude, the solemnity of the dawn, that most

tragic hour to human souls, for once came near to his spirit, and for once he answered.

The year 1841 finds Mendelssohn, so far as the happiness of his life is concerned, on the down grade. Leipzig was to him the centre of his artistic being and inspiration. There was no reason why he should have desired to exchange that city for another; but the command of a Prussian monarch was stronger to his mind than the instinct of an artist, and before the midsummer of 1841 he was living in Berlin. He did not, however, bind himself down to Berlin, for, indeed, he found his audiences unappreciative and indifferent—a very curious experience to Mendelssohn, and at this period of his career not altogether a salutary one. Leipzig again claimed his presence for the production of his *Scotch Symphony*; he visited for the last time Düsseldorf, and in the midsummer he was in London again for the Philharmonic season, where that symphony was again produced.

In the autumn he was back again at Berlin, but once more that city was to him as smoke to the eyes and vinegar to the teeth. He seemed at this period to be alternating between Leipzig and Berlin, but finally, in 1843, we find him gradually severing his connections with the Prussian capital. It was now that his mother died, and it would appear that to his mercurial temperament death at all times had the severest effect upon his constitution. Reading through the lines of life at a later time,

one can see the gradual shadow "that keeps the keys of all the creeds" lifting his awful hands over one whose buoyancy was beginning to leave him as one might part with a friend.

It would seem that *Elijah* alone held him in the bondage of artistry, despite his conducting and his writing of many minor compositions. His kindness, too, at this period never left him, and there is the record of his support of Sterndale Bennett's candidature for the musical chair of Edinburgh to prove his activity in the cause of all that was most refined and delicate in art. London, always his best friend, called him back to the conducting of the Philharmonic Concerts in the May of 1844. Here, again, he seems to have taken from himself a new lease of brilliant activity, if for all too short a period. It was his last visit, and those of us who remember the wonderful 'cello playing of Piatti will read, not without emotion, the last words which he is recorded to have said on this the occasion of his final visit: "I must write a concerto for Piatti." Meanwhile *Elijah* starts upon its progressive way. Many an intervening work, as has been said, occupied his mind—sonatas, trios, and overtures. He made a singularly great mistake, one is bound to think, however, when, in the early days of 1846, he accepted the offer to settle in Leipzig as Professor of the Pianoforte in the Conservatorium. It is impossible not to feel that the task which he allotted to himself of taking a class of pupils for pianoforte and composition

was to a large extent a degradation of his genius, of his talent, and of his accomplishment. That he worked hard and conscientiously is only characteristic of the man, but that he had no right to do such work, with its academic round of perpetual irritation, its constant occasion for worry, is equally an absolute truth.

Towards the midsummer of this year *Elijah* was practically completed, and towards the end of August the Oratorio was in full rehearsal at Birmingham ; it was produced on the 26th of that month, and amid a scene of unparalleled excitement. This was indeed the zenith of Mendelssohn's career. The applause, the enthusiasm, and the extraordinary appreciation of the vast audience were altogether unrestrained. Here, again, so the Fates had willed it, the perpetual good fortune which attended this singular man's footsteps through the world surrounded him as with a garland of flowers. His Oratorio was published in the middle of 1847, and on November 4 of the same year he was dead. Toil had been too much for him. The sheer excitement of life, the intensity of the pressure under which he chose to arrange the circumstances of his labour, had burnt out his too brief candle in the space of some thirty-seven summers. Death in a certain sense is a compensation to the work of the world, and he who flies dies sooner than he who walks. In the instance of Wagner, it may be said that his career began at a later age than that at which Mendelssohn died ;

there was his compensation in old age. But this brilliant and amazing man, not exactly great, and yet above every artistic littleness, spent his brain as a candle is spent in a vessel of oxygen. If it cannot be said, as it can be said in the case of Mozart, that his death left the world very much poorer, one can at least mourn over the years which were not granted to Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and can well understand the meaning of the great cry which went up from his contemporaries when they heard the news of his death, and which embodied itself in the immortal phrase : " Oh, the pity of it, Iago ! Oh, Iago, the pity of it ! " " Weep for the dead, for his light hath failed ; weep but a little for the dead, for he is at rest."

## HIS ART

**T**HE death of Mendelssohn at Leipzig on November 4, 1847, took the public by surprise; for, indeed, so young and so vital a man seemed destined for future achievements and for future successes towards which his early triumphs had pointed. So steadily had he advanced, as far as the eye of the public was concerned, from point to point in his musical accomplishments that at that early age men scarcely seemed to think it possible that he should have completed his career, when, according to all the laws of ordinary nature, he was only standing upon its boundary.

The strangest part about his end was probably the extreme depression of his brain: he could not remember his triumphs; he could only remember his failures. Such memories seemed to have so crowded upon his imagination that its quickness and its readiness, its susceptibility to new impressions, seemed actually to fall away from him. Yet he naturally felt that he had done so much; and who knows but that he thought he was nearing



the end? Like many great men whose candles burn, in Shelley's great phrase, through the night of time, he seemed to have some pre-science of his early separation from all that made his life happy and delightful in this world. He was wont to talk about his end, and in occasional moments of noble egotism to compare his years with those of Mozart.

The criticism which we have in previous chapters made in comparison with the musical influence of the two men will show that in this respect Mendelssohn overrated his own public influence, or—should one rather say?—the influence which he thought to wield over the universal public. It would be idle to depreciate the position which he took in the musical world of his time; but life had been early too much for him, and his last pathetic walks with his wife, his little desires to see the faces of his family, pointed all too surely towards the final scene which remains among the historical facts of modern musical history. His illness might have been that of a king, and, of course, within the limits which I have already named in the course of this volume, Mendelssohn was undoubtedly a king of his art. Sir George Grove records that the public feeling during his illness "was intense"; bulletins were issued day by day, and strangers came from all parts of North and South Europe to inquire as to the state of his health. Here, indeed, was a human triumph. But it must be remembered that Mendelssohn had above all

composers caught the public ear, and had compelled the public to listen to his music, not so much because it was ranged upon the highest platform of art, but because he knew how to combine a magnificent technical equipment, an amazing resource of sheer technical ability, with the lesser, the more intelligible, the more everyday kinds of melody which make the average hearer pleased, because he feels that he can understand such work, and yet that he has not been insulted by being requested to understand it. Therein, as one has said, lies the difference between the lark and the robin: the robin appeals necessarily to one's sentimental emotions, because, as Lowell reminds us, he alights upon our window-sill and appeals to our humanity; but the lark chooses its place in the skies, whither no man can follow it.

Modernity has chosen somewhat to relieve itself of Mendelssohn. The new critic has chosen also to set him on one side; he has been despised for the cheapness of his melodies and the thinness of his harmonies. Wagner has reminded us that he was a Jew. Later writers have reminded us that his principal attempt was to write beautiful melody. In a word, Mendelssohn has been a sort of racquet-ball, tossed about from net to net. But, in summing up the facts of his life, it is necessary to forget all these controversies, all these quarrels between critic and critic, and to remember that in the long-run the world has accepted him and his work, and has pro-

claimed its essential determination not to let that work disappear from its desire for that which is highest in musical art. The world is right; the majority invariably prevails. Much of that which is best in our thoughts, in our feelings, in our emotions, in our desires, was represented by Mendelssohn, though he assuredly cannot be described as one of those prophets who run ahead of our time, and who have to wait in the great meadows of immortality for humanity to catch up to them. Mendelssohn, on the other hand, took humanity in both his arms, and gave it an embrace which filled its heart with joy at the time, but which since his death has been described as being among the cheap things of life. But the equipoise of art and life in the end rights all things : injustice is always equally balanced by justice ; the balance becomes adjusted, and finally the position of the great man of any time becomes as assured as the position of any singular star which rolls round the system of the universe to which we mortals, despite of pride, must confess ourselves to submit. Such a star was Mendelssohn, whatever the significance of his life may have been, and he belonged to that planetary system which, with its suns and with its minor satellites, revolves about the artistic centre of all this unintelligible world of futile desire, of anxious ambition, of great art, and of eternal oblivion.

## THE " ELIJAH "

**I**N criticising a single important work by Mendelssohn, I find that, upon the whole, it would be best to deal with *Elijah*, his best-known and most widely popular work—at all events, in this country. In it he took up definitely the ideal of the Handelian oratorio, and he dealt with it to a large extent from Handel's point of view. His thought was to combine the personal drama of the life of the great prophet with a connecting commentary upon the various details which had been thus touched upon dramatically. To its composition he gave all the powers of his mind, and, so far as his extreme tendency towards rapid composition would allow, he was as laborious over its details as it was in his power to be. In entering into competition with such a work as " Messiah " he, of course, made a profound mistake ; but, apart from any inferiority which his work may show when set in comparison to Handel's masterpiece, there is no doubt that he has so far succeeded, in that the two works are practically regarded as equally popular by the " musician in the street." Possibly the finest touch in the whole Oratorio is to be found in the first dozen bars ;

it is Elijah's Curse upon the Land and his Prophecy of the Great Drought. Here a note is struck full of potent and of tragic possibility, developing immediately into an overture written in very much the same spirit as the overture to "Messiah." Without any interlude, we are introduced to the chorus, "Help, Lord," an excellent specimen of the finest academic writing, and ending in a strikingly original choral recitative; the duet with chorus which follows continues the same sentiment with singular freshness and beauty.

The dramatic motive of the Oratorio now begins to take a prominent position, and from this time forward we have that perpetual alternation between dramatic work which is not quite drama and, save for a few but unmistakable pages, choral work which is not quite "absolute music," that distinguishes the work so curiously. Doing each so well, so extremely well, and yet doing neither superlatively well, he exposes for us an extremely curious psychological question. Handel in his most dramatic moments, however, retained the full classical force, and in his most classical moments he showed himself equally a master of drama. The contrast will at once be observed. The little dramatic recitative of which I have spoken merges at once into the peculiarly sugary air which is now so popular with every artist of the cottage piano, "If with all your Hearts." You are teased immediately afterwards by a swift and significant chorus, "Yet but the Lord sees

it not." Again he challenges comparison with Handel by his introduction of a grave choral passage reminiscent of the final bars of "For we like Sheep." In the double quartet written for Angels, "For He shall give His Angels charge," one finds Mendelssohn at his very sweetest; here the rhythm and counter-rhythm of a most charming melody, and the superfine sense of correct counterpoint, wedded to a genuinely high inspiration, make for one of the most beautiful pages in the whole score. I continue to insist upon the contrasts of his talent, and nowhere will they be found so prominently emphasized as in the "Scena" of the Widow and Elijah, which is followed by the chorus "Blessed are the Men." So far as Mendelssohn was capable of drama, unless one excepts the famous "Watchman Scene" from the *Lobgesang*, he is here at his high-water mark in dramatic expression. The final command of Elijah, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," which is joined afterwards by the soprano in a fervent series of thirds above the bass part, forms probably the most beautiful passage in the whole Oratorio. The lovely fugue, "Blessed are the Men," which immediately follows is an example of absolute music in which there is not the least sign of dramatic feeling.

In the next episode the climacteric of the Oratorio is reached. The whole of the appeal of the Prophets to Baal, and of the scene describing the fire descending from heaven in response to the prayer of Elijah, although

occasionally marked by undue effort and very often by an exasperating avoidance of the point, is nevertheless a piece of real and genuine inspiration. The Baal choruses, of course, have intense spirit—if at times that spirit is not broad, but is confined within too strait a limit. Again, there is a luscious little piece of part-writing in "Cast thy Burden," and in the chorus "The Fire descends from Heaven" the Oratorio soars to a high level, which it never again touches; perhaps it was the sense of power which Mendelssohn felt at that moment which gave him the boldness to enter into actual competition with Handel. The critic may fruitfully compare the modern master's "Is not His word like a Fire?" with Handel's "For He is like a Refiner's Fire." I fear much that the glory thereof will not go to the master of the nineteenth century.

We come now to the most celebrated of all the scenes in the work, Elijah's Invocation of Rain. The appeals of the Prophet, the phrases assigned to the youth watching the heavens, the gradual *crescendo* of feeling, and the singular facility of the music throughout, have all tended to make it extremely popular. Clearly no trials were destined for such music as this; its lack of depth is compensated by the ease with which anybody can understand it; it is the music of a perfect gentleman who is telling a dramatic story with all the stage feeling of a drawing-room reciter; to this also must be added the

fact that the music is beautifully written and is absolutely sincere. But it is not art of the highest kind.

The second part of the Oratorio is neither popularly nor dramatically so interesting as the first. The opening air and chorus, "Hear ye, Israel," and "Be not afraid" have not the same nervous vitality which at all events distinguishes most of the first part of the work. The scene also between the Queen and the People, which is energetic and full of excellent writing, is admirable in a certain quick and fine sense of symmetry, and possesses true emotion; but somehow it seems to lack the finer Mendelssohn touch. Of the further scenes of Elijah's despair, one has the same observation to make until we reach the terzetto, "Lift thine Eyes"; this remains as one of the sweetest numbers in the whole score, and introduces perhaps the tenderest of its choruses, "He watching over Israel."

Thence we pass to the most celebrated, the most popular, and probably the most widely known religious air in this country, "O rest in the Lord." Well, it seems unbecoming, perhaps, to carp at a melody which has literally, like David, conquered its thousands, where an air of Mozart has perhaps conquered its hundreds. Of its sweetness there is no doubt: it is simple, and it is withal extremely sentimental; but the lurking doubt in Mendelssohn's own mind after the first performance of the Oratorio as to whether he should not delete the air alto-



gether from the work seems to me, without any further words, to be the best criticism on its merits. At any rate, there can be no doubt that the last two bars are, for such a musician as Mendelssohn, extraordinarily cheap.

As though the artist were aware of this fact, he follows these pages, of which he did not himself approve, by some really fine choral writing. "Behold God the Lord" is singularly rich in all the qualities which mark the highest point of his second-best style. The remainder need not occupy one long, save for two numbers—the culmination of the whole drama in the chorus "Then did Elijah," in which wonderful cleverness of detail and appreciation of the right sort of phrase does duty for original inspiration, and the singularly beautiful quartet, "O come, everyone that thirsteth." The final chorus is rather like the work of a tired man glad to get to the end of his labours. If this appreciation of *Elijah* may seem to some not laudatory enough, I can only explain that it is based on most unprejudiced thought, and upon a very long experience of the work as it has been performed by most various choirs, under most various circumstances. There will be a great number of readers who will disagree with my estimate, but I pray them to remember that such an estimate is not given irresponsibly, nor with any design or desire to show a superiority in judgment, which assuredly the present writer does not feel.

## MENDELSSOHN'S PRINCIPAL WORKS

**T**HE principal published works of Mendelssohn may be briefly summarized :

There are five symphonies, the *Lobgesang*, of course, figuring in the list.

Six concert overtures, and also an overture for a military band.

One (and one only) concerto for violin and orchestra.

Two concertos for pianoforte and orchestra, and three briefer compositions for the same musical combination.

One octet, two quintets, and seven quartets for strings ; three quartets for pianoforte and strings ; a sonata for the violin and pianoforte ; two sonatas and a set of variations for violoncello and pianoforte ; and two trios for strings.

Two duets for pianoforte, three sonatas for pianoforte, and one fantasia ; sixteen scherzos and capriccios ; eight books of *Lieder ohne Worte* ; seven characteristic pieces ; six compositions for children ; seven preludes and fugues ; and three sets of variations.

Two oratorios and portions of a third.

Six sonatas, and three preludes and fugues for the organ.

One hymn (*Lauda Sion*), and two hymns for solo, chorus, and orchestra.

Five motets ; settings of the *Jubilate, Nunc Dimittis, Magnificat* ; two unaccompanied *Kyries* ; two also for men's voices only, and two for chorus and orchestra.

Three motets for female voices and organ ; three church pieces for solos, chorus, and organ.

Eight psalms for solo, chorus, and orchestra ; six *Sprüche* for eight voices.

An opera ; an operetta ; the *Walpurgisnacht*, and fragments of a second opera.

The incidental music to "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Athalia," "Antigone," and "Œdipus."

Two festival cantatas, ten duets, and some eighty-two songs for solo voices and pianoforte.

Seventeen part-songs for men's voices, and twenty-eight part-songs for mingled voices.

A Quartet in E flat, which was first played in England at the Monday Popular Concerts only a year after its publication, in 1880.

There remain some unpublished pieces, chiefly in autograph, written for the most part before 1830. They include fugues for strings ; concertos for pianoforte, and two for two pianos and orchestra ; there is a trio for pianoforte, violin, and viola ; there are two sonatas for pianoforte and violin ; one sonata

for pianoforte and viola ; one for pianoforte and clarinet. There are two further pianoforte solos, and a quantity of miscellaneous studies, fantasias, and works for the pianoforte alone ; there are many fugues, too, written for organ. There is an organ part written to Handel's "Solomon"; operatic work ; the music to Calderon's "Steadfast Prince" ; three sacred cantatas, and a further cantata dealing with a profane subject ; a number of motets, and, to conclude, a quantity of vocal pieces and songs.

## SOME BOOKS ON MENDELSSOHN

**T**WO volumes of letters (Leipzig).

Eight letters, including a sketch of Mendelssohn (Leipzig, 1871).

“Musiker Briefer,” by Nohl (1867).

“F. M. B.,” by Lampadius (London, 1878).

“A Sketch of the Life and Works of the late Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy,” by Julius Benedict (London, 1850).

“Reminiscences of Mendelssohn,” by Charles Edward Horsley.

There have also been published a large number of descriptions, appreciations, etc., in magazines, volumes of letters, and reminiscences; and within the last ten years a series of very characteristic and charming letters written by Mendelssohn himself during his Italian tour.

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